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GIVEN BY

Frank C. Brown

THE
CATHOLIC
ARCHBISHOP

CATHOLIC CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

Compliments of
Maginnis, Walsh & Sullivan, Architects
Boston, Massachusetts &
Los Angeles, California

CATHOLIC CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

CHARLES D. MAGINNIS

Fellow of the American Institute of Architects



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Note

CERTAIN clergymen and architects were recently invited to discuss the subject of "American Catholic Architecture" in the columns of *The Brick-builder*, a magazine devoted to the advancement of brick architecture. Though naturally developing a wide variety of views and sentiments, the contributors were found to be notably in agreement in their dissatisfaction with prevailing standards of ecclesiastical art. The more lengthy of the two professional papers is now republished, in the belief that there are many outside the restricted constituency of the publication in which it appeared for whom such an essay may be of interest.

The clerical contributors were Monsignor Lavalley, Rev. Dr. John Talbot Smith and Rev. James J. Flood, of New York, and Rev. Father Heuser, of Overbrook, Penn., editor of *The Ecclesiastical Review*, the architects being Mr. C. Grant LaFarge, New York, and Mr. Charles D. Maginnis, Boston.



SAN PIETRO, TOSCANELLA.

A ninth century façade of great beauty and refinement, which might well have influenced American church design. Admirably adapted to brick and terra cotta.

Catholic Church Architecture

IT may be conceded at once that, in view of the splendor of opportunity presented by its great building activity, the Catholic Church has so far contributed insignificantly to the art of the United States. Just why this opportunity has availed so little, however, is a consideration always passed over by the critic, who invariably writes on this subject in a mood either of testy impatience or of profound discouragement. To my mind, no present estimate of the artistic asset of the church in this country can possibly indicate the measure of its ultimate influence upon the national art. The hope may indeed seem visionary that, with modern methods of art production, the church will again inspire an artistic manifestation approaching the Gothic tra-

dition in beauty of thought or in sublimity of power. So indissoluble is the art element from Catholic life and thought, however, that the promise of big artistic possibilities must amply appear in the very vitality of the church itself. The history of our own times presents no more interesting phenomenon than the rejuvenation of the Catholic Church under democratic government. Sharply isolated from political institutions which were supposed to be necessary to its spiritual control, it has grown in the free play of its energies, not merely in numbers and power, but in sheer moral prestige, so as to be admittedly the most potent spiritual influence in American life. Indeed, signs are not wanting that it is to the splendid conservatism of this great moral authority that we must look to maintain the Christian ideal of society against the growing forces of materialism. It is not to be wondered at if, in the development of this real potentiality, involving as it did the solution of many great problems incident to the organization of a new and strangely constituted society, the energies of the church became too engrossed for the responsibilities of a discriminating art patronage.

In the meantime art was asserting itself as an important element in the national life quite independently of religious stimulus. So amazing indeed has been the development of this secular art within the last twenty years that the historic supremacy of Europe has finally been called into question in more than one department. The high standards now prevailing in our civic and domestic architecture, however, afford the most pertinent evidence of the remarkable elevation in national taste. That the Catholic Church will come into more sympathetic touch with this beautiful development is inevitable, as the conditions which have made for its detachment become gradually relaxed. As it is, I feel sure that many of the clergy do not realize the degree of this detachment, nor how far the old artistic prestige of the church has been compromised by a system of art production which its preoccupation and the hasty development of its boundaries were well calculated to foster. I refer to a system which owes its origin to Munich, a name which (great as it is in artistic association), in my judgment, symbolizes, therefore, most of the unfavorable influences which have retarded the healthy growth of Catholic art in America. Munich is the pernicious principle of Art in the control of Commerce. It is the multitude of foreign and domestic plaster-shops for turning out stereotyped saints by the thousands; it is the "combination" of western factory interests which is flooding the country with hideous altars and pews and confessional-boxes; it is the so-called architect who makes merchandise of his plans, scat-

tering them over the land in defiance of all the determining principles of site, tradition, climates, local resource, and natural environment. Munich is the smart man with the catalogue.

That the high artistic reputation of the German city should be thus prejudiced by the localization of so unhealthy a system is unfortunate. Munich has many eminent artists and admirable schools of art. But to suppose



CHURCH OF S. MARIA DELLE GRAZIE, MILAN.

Illustrating the possibilities of brick in application to monumental design. The church is attributed to Bramante, but only the great dome justifies the attribution.

that its best sentiment is in sympathy with mimeographic art production, or that the powers of its best artists are enlisted in it, is absurd. This is sufficiently apparent in the circumstance that, in order to remove the odium of it from the church, the Catholic Archbishop of Munich himself was forced a few years ago to issue a pastoral letter protesting vehemently against this spurious and mechanical Christian art, and warning his clergy to give it no countenance or support whatever.

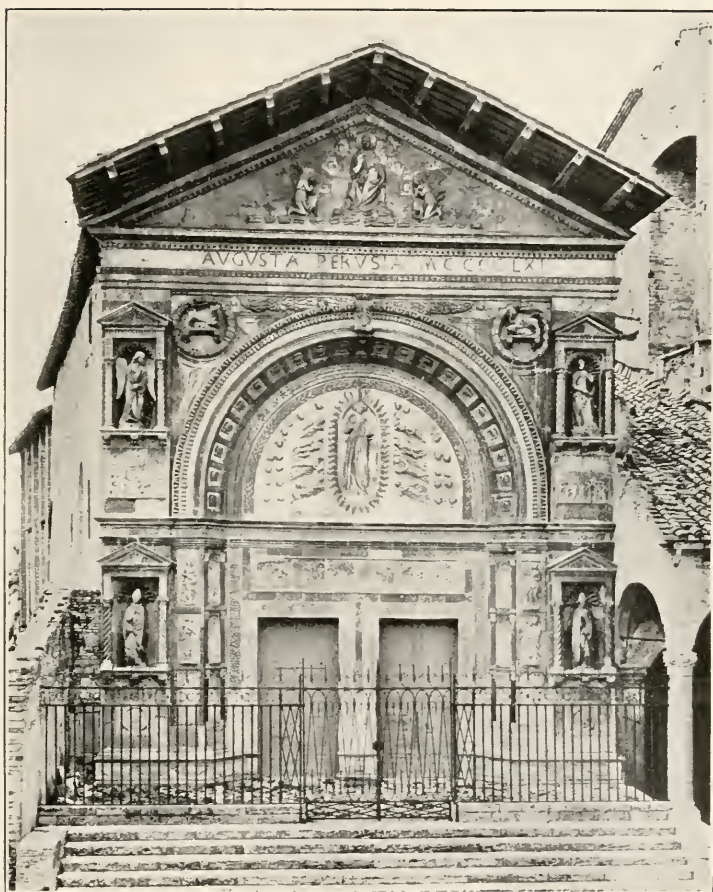
If art in the control of the counting-room is degenerate at Munich, what hope is there for the principle in a land where the commercial struggle is so keen that the fairest and most sequestered landscape is not sacred from the

impudent insistence on the excellence of Sapolio or the efficacy of Little Liver Pills? Every-day experience proves that it makes not merely for low artistic standards, but for degrading methods. And yet, under perfunctory patronage, this principle has grown to be a serious menace to the cause of Catholic art in this country. We must not hope for higher standards until a greater deliberation is exercised in the determination of the sources of true art production, for under present conditions art is not to be had merely by paying for it. There is surely no lack to-day in this country of accomplished architects and sculptors and decorative artists, men who are eager to give their best service to the cause of ecclesiastical art. If it be not easy, except for those of keen artistic perceptions, to dissociate these from the mass, a little investigation will easily reveal them; and no personal or parochial consideration ought



THE CATHEDRAL, PRATO.

A building of extremely graceful lines. The tower, which is admirably proportioned, is also splendidly placed to give the right accent to the composition. It is amazing that such a building as this, so well adapted to the materials with which we usually deal, should have proved so uninspiring to Catholic architecture in America.



CHURCH OF SAINTS ANDREA AND BERNARDINO, PERUGIA.

A classical composition of much dignity and beauty, though now somewhat overloaded with ornament of varying scale and feeling. The design is full of admirable suggestion.

to be permitted to weigh in favor of him whose capacity does not survive a reasonable test. It often happens that the incapable architect is a very decent sort of a fellow, who causes considerable flow of the milk of human kindness, but the folly of employing him to design a church can be demonstrated by arithmetic. Suppose \$50,000 to have been appropriated for the erection of a



CHURCH OF SAN PIETRO SOMALDI, LUCCA.

This is one of many stately Italian types which, while not literally adaptable, is full of beautiful suggestion for American churches. The position of the tower was determined by immediate conditions; otherwise it were better placed, as at Prato.

parish church capable of seating one thousand people. A fifth of that sum will suffice to build a comfortable weather-proof structure of the requisite capacity and equip it with all physical essentials for congregational worship. Four-fifths, therefore, of the appropriation is intended to secure an expression of architectural dignity in keeping with the solemn destination of the build-

ing. Even an ignorant architect or an ordinary mechanic may intelligently guide the expenditure of one-fifth of the appropriation, but, since he cannot reach an artistic issue, \$40,000 must be wasted under his hands,—a big sum of money to go for nothing. It was spent for art, and art is not the result, but something which is not to be argued into a resemblance to it by any degree of parochial approval. Architecture has its standards quite as well marked as those of literature even if they be equally obscure to the general public. It may be only five men in fifty have artistic discrimination, but is there a much bigger proportion who have literary judgment? Of the rest there are many who would yield no superiority to Ruskin over the local reporter. Yet literature is still worth while.

So vital a point, indeed, is the selection of the architect that upon it turns really the whole question. Since the services of the good architect usually cost no more than those of the bad one, it seems clear that only two considerations should be brought to bear on a particular candidacy: first, the professional capacity of the man; second, his personal integrity. The best test of his capacity is the judgment of his own profession. How is he regarded by those who are eminent in it? Are his accomplishments acknowledged? If not, no weight whatever should be given to the circumstance that he has already designed many churches,—they are presumably bad. Any man who has designed ten churches without receiving the commendation of so liberal a profession must be presumed to have done his share in discrediting Catholic architecture, and should be passed over. The personal honor of the candidate may be considered reasonably established if, like the respectable lawyer, he can claim membership in the professional society which regulates the ethics of practice. In the face of Monsignor Lavelle's testimony, however, it ought to be still further attested by the experience of his previous clients. The architect once selected, his service ought to be permitted to extend, in the interest of artistic congruity, to the selection of every detail, including not merely the altars and the furniture, but the mural and window decoration. These matters are as much the legitimate concern of the architect as the structure itself. A bad decorator may easily ruin the effect of a fine interior, and even a very good one, if he happen to have no particular sympathy with the architecture, may contrive to give it an entirely wrong expression.

Some of the clerical contributors have touched upon the economic condition of the architect's problem. It is, indeed, a very vital matter, since the amount of money available in a given case may not only determine the degree



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, AREZZO.

and character of its elaboration, but may control the entire organism and style of the building. It is customary to speak of a limited building fund as a stultifying condition, as if it must necessarily make for inferior architecture, as if there existed some essential affinity between the artistic value of a work and the intrinsic cost of the materials of which it is made. As a matter of fact, the element of cost has no relation whatever to artistic beauty. Very often cut granite and polished marbles serve only to emphasize the inherent ugliness of



PLEASING DECORATIVE SETTING TO AN ORDINARY
COMMERCIAL STATION.

bad design. Such is the alchemy of art that an unpretentious brick church, with the mark of gifted hands upon it, may have more artistic value than the cathedral. The economic condition, therefore, is not only not essentially prejudicial, but if it encouraged, as it ought to encourage, a simpler and more thoughtful kind of building, its influence would be, on the contrary, decidedly healthy. Let us not blame our poverty for our bad architecture, but the tasteless men who made that poverty ridiculous. Are we not sick and tired of the illiterate misrepresentation by which our sacrifice is made to strive by a system of architectural shams after more merit than it really has? Is it not a monstrous libel upon the splendid spirit of Catholic giving to thus mistranslate it into an expression of smirking hypocrisy designed to impress the neighbors? Of the grosser violations of the ethical principle in architectural beauty

(such as the use of imitation marbles) it should be unnecessary to speak in an article on the designing of churches. Such insincerities, even if they may be assumed to gratify an untutored popular taste, have a very pernicious significance in association with the house of God. Who is confident enough to say that there is no insidious mischief done to the faith of the worshiper in that shock of disillusionment with which he perceives on the walls of the church the lie which is designed to deceive him? But the real nature of architecture is violated most commonly in the unintelligent effort to achieve beauty that has no structural authority. Architectural illusions may, of course, be created out of cardboard with historic outlines and good proportion of parts, but architecture must have organism as well as form, and the form and the organism must be so intimately wedded that one is the felicitous expression of the other. And yet, out of this scenic point of view, we constantly see flimsy materials used to simulate the rich externals of enduring masonry. Buildings profess to be of stone on the flimsy title of a veneer on the aisle walls, leaving the insincerity of the profession to be demonstrated by the wooden clearstory and the copper pinnacles. Gothic churches are still constructed of wood with meaningless pointed arches, their proud buttresses built of pine boards,—a triumph of the tenpenny nail. In the interior, lath and plaster, besides fulfilling their legitimate function of wall-covering, are persuaded into historic forms for which their properties utterly unfit them. Rarely is there any expression of vitality. The beautiful open-timber roofs, which so frankly confess their office and may be made so beautiful, are hardly ever employed. We find the nobility of masonry exemplified in the New York Cathedral, where it imparts such an effect of muscular energy, of living, sentient architecture; but where else? St. Patrick's in lath and plaster would be ridiculous and unworthy to be classed as a great church. It is quite possible to bring something of the spirit of St. Patrick's into our parish churches, and until we do there can be no real health in our architecture. Above all, no Gothic should be attempted without the means to create such an effect of structural energy.

The economic condition apart, it is clear we need more simplicity, more sincerity, in our building. In these days especially, when the sumptuosities of art are employed to promote the interest of the social and business advertisement, the church, if it is to possess a distinctive expression, if it is to have within its doors an atmosphere not of the street, must wear an aspect of reticence, of dignity, even of severity.



DIOCESE OF MONTEREY AND LOS ANGELES
RIGHT REV. THOMAS J. CONATY D. D. BISHOP

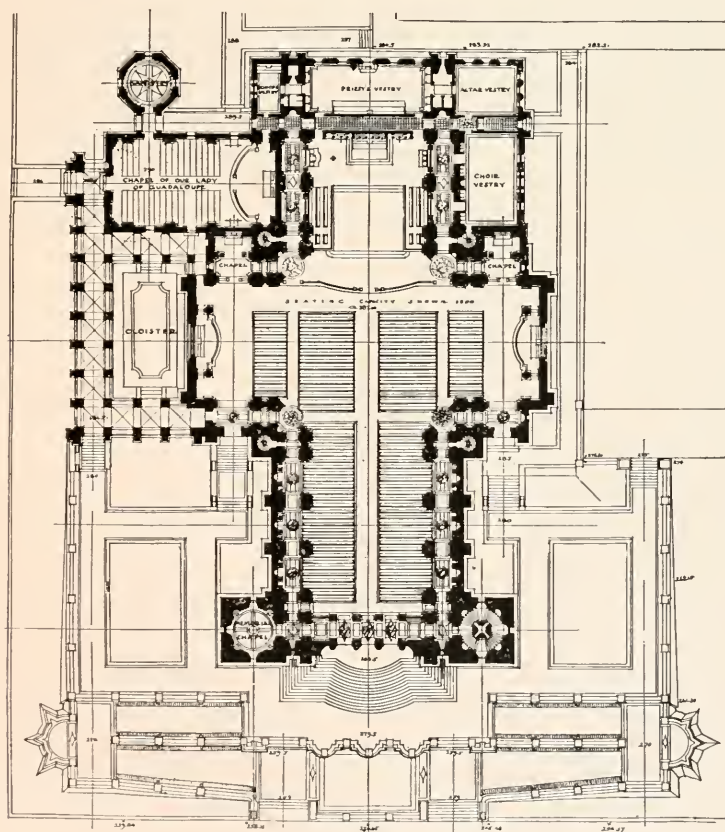
CATHEDRAL OF ST VIBIANA

LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA
MAGINNIS WALSH AND SULLIVAN ARCHITECTS BOSTON AND LOS ANGELES



EXAMPLE OF MONUMENTAL CHURCH BUILDING FOR WHOSE STYLE THERE WAS FOUND AUTHORITY IN THE IMMEDIATE TRADITIONS AS WELL AS IN THE CLIMATE OF THE LOCALITY

TO what extent should we permit the architectural traditions of Europe to govern the development of church architecture in America? Do there exist any peculiar conditions or tendencies here which make a demand upon the architect for a less historic expression? Does the traditional organism of the church building logically meet all the requirements of modern congregational needs?



PLAN, CATHEDRAL, LOS ANGELES, CAL.

The entire congregation is here brought within the points of support without detriment to the architectural perspective of the interior.



MAIN ALTAR, BASEMENT CHURCH AT BROCKTON, MASS.

The design embraces the entire width of the nave and is executed in a white cement composition, the statuary being after special designs.

These are questions which frequently obtrude upon the mind of the architect in the absence of any authoritative definition of his problem. It is remarkable that the clerical contributors to this discussion offer little encouragement to what was assumed to be a real demand for a departure from the traditional plan in respect of the use of side aisles for seating. Yet the innovation of the fixed pew has undoubtedly introduced a new condition, if a purely utilitarian one, which has not been frankly met. In European churches, where the altars are so numerous and the pavement is left quite free, so that processions can cross the floor in all directions, columns and piers offer no impediment. But in the American church, where the high altar is the center of interest,— the focal point for an entire congregation,— the division of the floor space into three parts by two rows of columns, which obstruct the vision of a considerable number of people, appears arbitrary and irrational. To omit the columns altogether, however, is simply to rob the church of its traditional aspect, substituting an auditorium character which is very objectionable. No expedient can be entertained which does such violence to historic sentiment. A compromise commonly resorted to consists in reducing the diameter of the columns, often to a grievous attenuation, which is only begging the question. What might be considered a reasonable solution is illustrated in the plan of the new Cathedral designed for Los Angeles, Cal. Here the optical condition



INTERIOR OF BASEMENT CHURCH AT BROCKTON, MASS.

Illustrating the spanning of the entire nave without recourse to the usual small columns.

is satisfied and the traditional perspective at the same time preserved by making the nave fairly broad and the side aisles merely of ambulatory width. The transepts, which are ordinarily more or less screened from a view of the altar by the big piers which normally result from the intersection of the nave, are here rendered entirely available by the splaying of the corners. As this large central space can find logical architectural expression only in a dome, which is essentially a cathedral feature, such a plan would require modification to fit the needs of the parish church—a modification of which it is quite susceptible, as shallower transepts would obviate the necessity for splaying the piers at the crossing. With the basilica type of plan, however, there is the difficulty that the ambulatories would not be wide enough to permit of being terminated by side altars. The ambulatory feature, therefore, is to be recommended, in association with the basilica, only for the smaller churches where, by means of ventilated niches in the outer walls, it may be made to give excellent place to the confessionals, without the usual displacement of seats.

There need be no outrage done to tradition, therefore, in satisfying an utilitarian condition which, if it be not arbitrary, is at least considered frequently to be of some importance.

Should the new papal recommendation in respect to church music prove to be widely effective, it will make for the deepening of the chancel, which will be a great gain from the artistic point of view. At present the chancel has,



ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, WHITINSVILLE, MASS.

An example of the Northern Italian Gothic in brick and terra cotta.

nearly always, too little architectural dignity and is not seldom reduced to a big niche in the rear wall. The spirit of such a change as this would be singularly opposed to that which is working towards the auditoriumizing of the church. One is toward the historic plan; the tendency of the other, away from it. Whatever the issue, the deep and lofty chancel would be unquestionably in the interest of good architecture. In Gothic designs we too rarely see the gable-ended chancel of the English type, which gives such fine opportunity for a noble mullioned window. The objection to a flood of light over the altar may easily be met by employing for the window decoration such a subject as the Crucifixion, which would require a low, mellow tone in the glass.

The basement church is a source of perplexity to the architect, as it is often very difficult to express it exteriorly without prejudice to the general effect. Ideally, the base of any formal architectural composition ought to be as nearly as possible unbroken in order to convey an impression of repose. The pierc-



CHURCH AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

A stately type of Italian Byzantine executed in gray brick and dull white glazed terra cotta, with mosaics in color.

ing of this base, then, by a series of windows large enough to carry light unto a wide and very low apartment must serve to impart a more or less uneasy look to the superstructure. Many of our buildings in consequence look restless and undignified. The basement church is not by any means, however, an artistically impossible condition of the architect's problem. Indeed, I believe that it may be given a decidedly serious and artistic character, being, at the same time, well aware that its effect is nearly always hideously ugly. Architects appear to have been satisfied to regard this untraditional feature of the church as hopelessly utilitarian. The idea of this secondary church *is* utilitarian, but it is a church and ought to be treated responsibly. That it is susceptible of some measure of architectural interest is fairly demonstrated by St. Margaret's, Brockton, Mass. Here, by a steel girder construction, the usual clutter of small columns has been avoided, the number introduced corresponding to that designed for the church overhead. These columns have been given a sturdy character with capitals of rich symbolic pattern, close-knit in a Byzantine manner, the capitals varying in design. The line of the chancel is marked by a vigorous segmental arch, and, within, distinction and



TYMPANUM.

Illustrating the artistic restraint which ought to characterize ecclesiastical decoration.



PEW END
CELTIC STYLE.

importance have been given the altar, horizontally rather than vertically, by carrying the reredos the width of the nave. The altars and reredos being executed in white cement, the expense was much less than would have been necessary to purchase a small altar of marble which, in itself, would be inadequate to furnish the chancel. The stations of the cross are set in the wall and surrounded, not by ready-made frames, but by arabesque borders of special design. If the basement is a necessary adjunct of the parish church, and there are many reasons for considering it such in populous centers, it ought to be worthy of serious artistic study.

A word may well be said on the subject of the window lighting from



TYPE OF ARCHITECTURAL
FIGURE.



CHURCH AT LEOMINSTER, MASS.

An example of the late English Gothic, showing large east window of a rich design of opalescent glass.

the point of view of the architect. There is such a curiously general sentiment in favor of bright interiors that one feels diffident about proclaiming it as mistaken. Yet it is undeniable that our church interiors have often too lively an effect to be devotional. The light is too uniformly distributed, so that there is little or no shadow to give effect of mystery. In aggravation of this, the mural decoration is frequently thin and pale, so that the whole effect is rather bizarre than solemn. I do not advocate such an atmosphere as will make the reading of one's prayer-book a strain upon the eyesight, but a system of lighting may easily be devised which would greatly contribute to the emotional appeal of the architecture. On the subject of artificial lighting, I shall not enter further than to express the hope that, in the same interest, time may moderate the passion for those electric extravagances which suggest the theatre rather than the church. He has little religious sentiment, indeed, over whose imagination the little ruby light of the chancel has not more power than a thousand Edison lamps.



INTERIOR OF ST. LEO'S, LEOMINSTER, MASS.

Illustrating a vital system of construction, the structural lines executed in moulded brick and gray terra cotta.

The relative adaptability of historic architectural styles to church building in America has been a matter of much interesting discussion. So far as it is an academic question, however, the battle of the styles need not be regarded, under the circumstances, as a very vital affair. That it should be necessary to canvass the merits of particular systems of architecture at all is a curiously anomalous condition which we owe to the evolution of the camera and the steamboat. In other times an architectural system obtained for centuries, during which a particular civilization expressed itself, generation after generation, with all the spontaneity of a common speech, with all the unconsciousness of geographical isolation, so that its manners and customs and its social and political history are clearly recorded in its architecture. Contrast such a condition with our own, and is it to be wondered at if, with all the architec-



CHURCH AT NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

A quaint type of Northern Gothic, suitable for a small town or village with picturesque surroundings.

tural precedents from Pericles to McKinley, from classic Greece to Oklahoma, bound in volume at his elbow, the modern architect is embarrassed and self-conscious; that, allured by the beauty with which other times and other manners have been expressed, he is apt to be persuaded into a false expression of his own? It is thus that our architecture to a great extent is merely an epitome of past architectural epochs, an historical panorama — even in its very confusion, however, full of intelligibility to the future historian of the time, to whom it cannot fail to be likewise occasionally diverting, as he observes the flippancy and caprice with which we have dealt with our artistic heritage. But if there has been much of playfulness in the spirit with which we have



CHURCH AT BRIGHTON, MASS.

A stately type of Romanesque.

dealt with the materials of the past, there has been, too, a great deal of serious experimentation based upon the principle that a true architecture must be essentially national and racial, though it has so far developed no thoroughly vital and expressive system. That the history of art, long and varied as it is, should fail to furnish forth, ready-made to our hands, an architectural style which lends itself to the instant expression of a civilization so intensely individual, and withal so exceedingly complex, as ours, is not remarkable. Indeed, it is not easy to say which one of several historic styles now much employed offers the most promising claims for adaptability. The gradual assertiveness of our own peculiar needs, of our own racial genius, accompanied by a lessening consciousness of tradition, a more national self-reliance, must tend to the ultimate development of a native architectural system. Whether a style of architecture, however, which is the product of the intense civic activities of



APSE AND ALTAR AT BRIGHTON, MASS.

Showing the refinement of Byzantine decoration.

the nation will have any pertinence to ecclesiastical needs is another matter. In any case, so venerable an organization as the Catholic Church at least will, it is safe to say, be slow to express itself in terms unfamiliar or unhistoric. There is some danger, on the contrary, of its continuing architectural traditions which have long ceased to be valuable: for, in spite of its temporal uni-



HIGH ALTAR, MARLBORO, MASS.

Showing a late English Gothic altar and reredos designed in conjunction with chancel windows, the whole forming one composition.

versality and its consequent indifference to the changing fashion of the day, the architectural history of the Catholic Church has its dead bones. As Father Heuser points out, much of what we admire, even in the art of the church, is related to antiquated social and political conditions. In estimating the probability of a development towards a nationally uniform ecclesiastical style, however, we must not lose sight of so determining a consideration as the diversity of climate which naturally characterizes so vast a territory as ours and, especially, of the great ethnical complexity of the Catholic body in America, a condition which in itself must be a powerful impediment for many years to come.

Since an organic ecclesiastical style is unlikely to issue spontaneously from the existing conditions, it would seem that nothing short of an hierarchical pronouncement could bring order out of the present chaos, and a most worthy question it would be for the determination of the hierarchy. Short of this measure there might be developed an admirable, most interesting, and experimentally instructive condition if the architecture of a particular diocese or archdiocese were confined to one style. The act of choice would thus, instead of being based upon the caprice of the clergyman or the architect, be magnified into an affair of dignified deliberation. It would make for a coherency of architectural expression, an organic

orderliness within the precise geographical limits of each ecclesiastical district, which would be edifying to a degree.

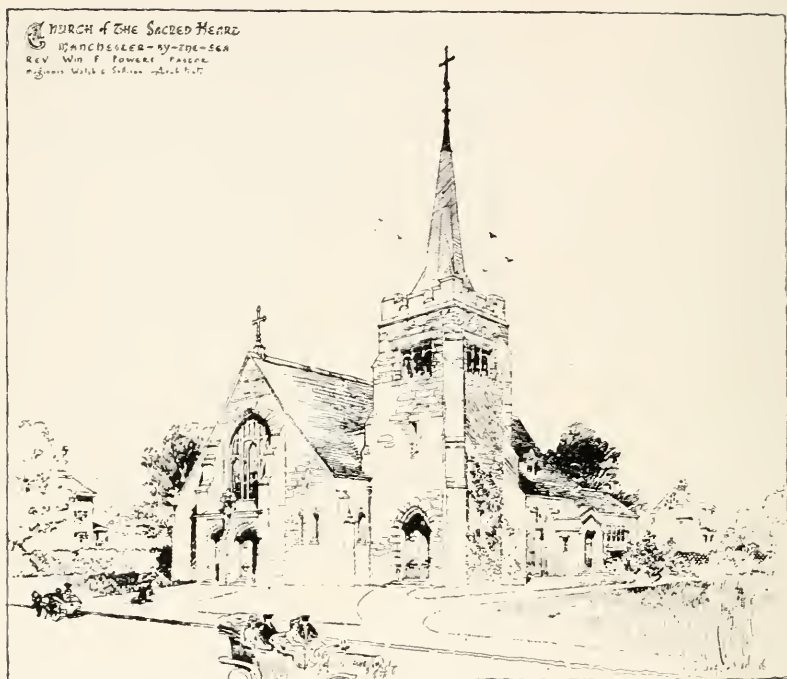
To examine at any length the relative claims on our consideration of the various historic styles already in use amongst us would be impossible in such an article as this. Something ought, however, to be said, if there were room for nothing else, towards removing an apparently wide-spread disbelief in the vitality of a style which, on many accounts, makes the most powerful claim upon our sympathies of them all. I refer, of course, to the Gothic, which is conceded, even by those who profess to regard it as an obsolete system, to be the most admirable artistic tradition of the church.

That the possibilities of this wonderful art have not yet been exhausted, that it still holds something for our life and time, is attested by the vigorous revival which is proceeding in England and in our own country, a revival which is earnestly stimulated by a few serious and conscientious architects of ability. While the Catholic body in England, inconsiderable as it is, has associated itself with this interesting movement to such purpose as was denoted by the high quality of its recent architecture illustrated in a previous paper, it is humiliating to realize that in



CHANCEL COLUMN IN BASEMENT CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Illustrating the symbolic design of the doves and the grape-vine so much associated with Byzantine decoration.



Illustrating a picturesque type of English village Gothic, executed in local seam-face granite.

this country the fruits have gone almost exclusively to the Episcopal Church, to which we appear to have effectually given over the Gothic tradition. It is not to be supposed that such a statement takes no account of the statistical fact that we have thousands of professedly Gothic churches of our own; but it is undeniable that, excepting St. Patrick's, New York, and a few parish churches of exceptional quality, there is no worthy Gothic architecture whatever in America to which we can lay claim. To say, therefore, that the Gothic style is commonplace in America, in any sense that would imply that we have much of it that is scholarly or serious or beautiful, is not true. When good Gothic architecture becomes hackneyed in America we will have reached a rare level of culture indeed.

A misapprehension exists, for which it is not easy to account, that the Gothic is an expensive style, but it is not necessarily more so than any other.



CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE, LOS ANGELES, CAL.

A free interpretation of the local Mission tradition. The statuary was specially designed for the building.

It is a style of wonderful flexibility whose genius can adapt itself to the modest parish church as well as to the great cathedral. Amiens might be divested of its lovely intricacies and be no less Gothic, so there still remained that magnificent sincerity of structure which must always be the first attribute of noble architecture. The most available model of the Gothic system for the needs of the Catholic Church in America, and the most beautiful and stately, is the parish type of the perpendicular Gothic of England, than which no better tradition could be intrusted by the church to the hands of the sympathetic architect.

The early round-arched types of Lombardy and Sicily, developed as they have been from the materials of brick and terra cotta, with which our means require us chiefly to deal, are likewise so beautifully suggestive for our uses

that it is wonderful why they have been so long disregarded. Many of these have an interesting Byzantine feeling which would encourage the development of that beautiful system of ornament which one sees so gloriously exemplified in the interior of St. Mark's at Venice and in the old churches of Ravenna and Sicily. Inexpressibly noble and beautiful in their mosaic orderliness of color, these interiors are surpassed in devotional character only by the very highest expression of Gothic, which has almost no color whatever. In the light of this Byzantine tradition, how can we patiently tolerate the gaudily tinted walls and the parti-colored statuary which distinguish so many of our American churches?

Surely the time has finally arrived when the Catholic Church in this country should seek some level of artistic expression which will do less injustice to her religious culture. To longer endure the trifling of ignorant hands with the shaping of her material temple is to fatuously conceal the divinity of her message. Naught but an active sense of the dignity of her own inspiration is now wanting to the development of an artistic symbolism which shall manifest that inner beauty which, at present, is so persistently falsified in architectural ugliness and insincerity. The native art is intelligent and vital. In the buoyant grace and beauty of its secular activities we can see the promise which it holds for lofty accomplishment and its adequacy even to that supreme challenge which the Catholic Church alone can give it. This may be given or it may be withheld, for the church need feel no sense of obligation to contemporary art. But the obligation to itself is one which can no longer be ignored without serious loss of prestige and consequent injury to the effectiveness of its mission; namely, the obligation to express itself in such intelligible and coherent and therefore beautiful and scholarly terms of art as shall give convincing testimony of its divine constitution.

[In connection with this paper by Mr. Maginnis we have chosen to present some of the work which has been done by his firm, for the reason that we believe it best illustrates his ideas concerning Catholic Church design.—
THE EDITORS.]



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